The Commercialization of Leisure

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TO MY FATHER

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DESIRE FOR LEISURE

LEISURE is the chief end of life. You may moralize about the dignity of labor; you may get so into the habit of work that, like Dr. Manette in *A Tale of Two Cities,* you can not stop; but in the mind of every normal person there lies the hope of leisure. Some of our ancestors saw from bitter experience that life, for them, held no hope; that they were doomed to continuous drudgery in the face of such fearful odds as hunger, cold, and disease; and that leisure could come only after death. Struggling humanity has everywhere erected for itself a castle in the air, a place of repose, where the tired soul can remain throughout the ages undisturbed by the necessity of labor. The Elysian Fields, the Happy Hunting Ground, Walhalla, all present leisure and relief from work and hardships.

Never was a doctrine more welcome than that of a Christian Heaven coming to the tired peasant. Even Puritanism, coming at a time when wars, enclosures, and industrial changes were making the life of the peasant unbearable presented a cheerful picture of promise.

FORMER WAYS OF USING LEISURE

Every people has had a leisure class. And every people has had a typical way of using its leisure. Let us see how a few nations have used this valuable asset and how it has influenced their civilization.

1. GREEK: In ancient Greece, every free boy was encouraged to take part in amateur contests of all kinds. His school work was merely another form of athletics or contest. The games were a part of the religion and patriotism of the people. In all the games there was a place for all kinds of achievements. Here the runner tried his speed and the wrestler his skill, the discus-thrower his strength and the jumper his agility. Here were contests in oratory; here the musicians contended for the olive wreath; here the young playwright

displayed the first fruits of his genius and the philosophers expounded their precepts. There was no false exaggeration or professionalism. A contestant could win the prize only once in each kind of contest. But on the other hand there was too much system to allow much spontaneity. Exercise in music, athletics, and mental training were all consciously planned with a view to making a complete citizen. All the exercises of a boy were prescribed by a pedagogue; he was never allowed to seek his own amusement, and without this privilege there could be no real play.

The Greek revelled in the drama, music, oratory, poetry, and politics, and could indulge himself in any of these for a very low price. The theatre was generally owned by the city, and on certain days the people were admitted free. Recreation in Greece was cheap, of a high order, always amateur, and well regulated, and it never became sensuous. We think of Greek civilization as being of that same type, lofty, beautiful, clean, spiritual and wholesome, until contaminated by outlanders.

But this beautiful structure of leisure was

built upon a substratum of slavery and the subjection of women. Leisure was for free male citizens only. In the Age of Pericles there were in Athens four slaves to every free person. Besides these there were the women and outlanders, who made up by far the greater part of the population. Athens had a population of about two hundred thousand, of which only twenty thousand were citizens. Greek leisure was for an aristocracy of citizenship, and for every person who tasted the sweets of leisure and self-expression ten must lead a life of toil and subjection, unrelieved by even a glimpse of what their masters prized so much.

2. ROMAN: The Romans were more severe than the Greeks. With them everything had a purpose, and spontaneous play was discouraged. A boy practised at arms to become a soldier, he played ball to get exercise, he swam to avoid taking the necessary bath. For the Roman, play became work. No wonder he jumped at the chance of seeing a professional do his work. He copied everything Greek except his background. His nature demanded excitement and blood, or perhaps a

little coarse humor. And the history of Rome tells the sad story of professionalism in politics as well as in athletics, of corruption and vice both private and public, and of final downfall from internal weakness. By over-systematizing his recreation, the Roman killed that spontaneous amateurishness which lends joy to play, and made it a cold mechanical display, which was beautiful only in perfection. Small wonder that professionalism followed. And everyone knows the hideous excesses to which the Romans carried their amusements in the gladiatorial combats and chariots races.

3. MIDDLE AGES: In the Middle Ages, recreation was at once spasmodic and wholesome. The knights gave tourneys and the gentlemen practised fencing, hunting, and hawking, while the people indulged in archery, running, jumping, throwing, the Quintain, and a number of harmless games which were known later as *Shoeing the Mare, Hoodman Blind,* and *Hot Cockles.* Then there was always something to see or attend where one could find a large crowd. There were market days, fairs, spectacles, and celebrations of the calendar days with festivities, music, pa-

geants, masques, and drama. Every village had a common where the people could meet and dance on Sunday afternoon. In the towns, the guilds gave processions and banquets. Everywhere leisure was orderly; nowhere were there professionals except in the drama and music. Invariably the church and the better element of the community directed the pageants, the dancing, and the whole festivities, the priests often taking the lead.

Unfortunately, man runs to excess in almost everything he does. The mediaeval man was no exception to this rule. With the gentler sports always went the more brutalizing yet more immediately attractive sports, such as bull-baiting, bear-baiting, cock-fighting, and still more brutal fights between men. These were almost always attended by betting and its attendant evils. It was well for the parson to take part in the festivities of the community, but when he came to think more of festivities than of moral uprightness and religious teaching, a few of the sterner, more conservative people of the community began to rebel against a system which thought more of fox hunting than of men's souls, and that at a

time when men's souls were burning for new teachings.

There have always been ascetics, men and women who chose to deny themselves the pleasures of this world in order to live more fully in the next. Many of them scarcely lived at all in the world. At the time of the Reformation, asceticism was rapidly diminishing, but there were still a large number of people in Europe to whom the idea appealed. The English church finally forbade asceticism in almost every form, and yet it provided no substitute.

4. PURITAN: The Revolt of the Puritans from the Church of England was largely an ascetic movement. In one thing, however, the Puritans differed from the older ascetics: they were not averse to the accumulation of private property. They were individualistic, while the older was communistic, but in all else they were true ascetics. They lived in the world with their bodies, keeping their minds on the Great Beyond, which was their real and only true home. Their bodies must remain here until removed by some divine power. Meanwhile they must be kept thoroughly sub-

jected to the higher purpose. In order to do this the strictest rules had to be formulated for the guidance of each individual. As far as the body was concerned, the only positive commandment was, "Work, for the night cometh when no man can work." In all other matters the soul must wait patiently for death to release it from this sin-cursed frame. As a result, the Puritans have left us a code of negative morality which has no equal in the history of the world. A Levite might stand aghast to see his highest achievements outdone by the followers of Jesus. And yet the Puritan idea has held the Anglo-Saxon world enthralled for three centuries. "Merry England" is considered the gloomiest place in Europe. Of America we shall speak later.

In Puritan society, all pleasure was tabooed. Games, dancing, theatres were snares of the devil to lead men astray. The factious fellow, the clown, was frowned upon rather than laughed at. All expressions of joy, life, or bodily vigor were looked upon as evil. Jesus wept over the evils in the world. To the Puritans, who made a virtue of His weeping, a sad countenance was a most desirable pos-

session, not only in itself but for what it implied as to the manner of life.

The Puritans, it will be remembered, revolted against the whole Elizabethan regime. The Elizabethan English had looked upon pleasure as good in itself. Shakespeare said,

"If he steal aught whilst this play is playing
And 'scape detecting, I will pay the theft."

But the Puritan Parliament closed all the playhouses and enclosed the pleasure fields to which the people had gone time out of mind. They allowed rich landlords to enclose the village commons for sheep pasture. For the paltry sum of eighteen thousand pounds they even sold Hyde Park, which Henry VIII had bought and Charles I had thrown open to the public. They enacted Sabbath laws as strict as those of the Jews. With the Restoration most of these laws became null, but by that time Puritanism had gained its stronghold in the minds of men. To be sure, London society went to excesses of pleasure and vice never seen before, but the great conservative mass of Methodists, Baptists, and Presby-

terians remained uncontaminated and brought Puritanism to America almost unchanged.

On the surface, the Puritanism of half a century ago was very much like that of the time of Cromwell. Henry Ward Beecher could not understand why dissolute men would listen to a sermon in a drama but would not go to church, and reasoned from that that the theatre must be evil.

But internally a great change had come about. Puritanism had appealed especially to the early Americans. Life, for them, was a struggle against the almost overwhelming forces of nature, a war upon trees, stumps, weeds, cold, hunger, and Indians in which the frivolous were ruled out. They had no time and little inclination for play or players. They had no time to go in search of new duties, so accepted gladly a manner of life in which there were only two positive elements, their work and their religion. Work was a game more strenuous than war. To the victor was independence, wealth, influence, and power; to the loser was death. A far sterner sport was religion, a game Miltonic in grandeur, a battle of souls. To beat the devil was as

fascinating a sport as to beat an opponent in a duel. Heaven was as much the prize of a game and more worth winning than a silver trophy. To work all week was to avoid evil; to go to church on Sunday was to keep the Sabbath. The early Puritans were positive in their beliefs and interests. Their manner of life was entirely suited to their environment.

Gradually the fight against want became less pressing, and as life became more complex and more filled with the good things of earth, the fight against the devil waned and the goal became dimmer. Religion lost its vitality because it refused to keep up with the life and interests of the times. Soon nothing was left of the battle of life except the rules of the game. One is reminded of an old soldiers' reunion or a sham battle: the rules are the same but the great excitement, the passion, the prodigious energy, the heart throbs, the fears, the joy of battle are not there.

As Puritanism lost its vitality, its hold upon the imaginations of men; as people began to have time and money for the spending of

which their code made no provision, the desire for pleasure would not be denied. But the law was fixed and immutable. The decree went forth that anyone who indulged this desire was a child of the devil and not worthy of the notice of Christian people. But among large masses of people the decree fell on deaf ears and the insurgents went forth in search of strange gods. Puritanism like a tyrant of old had tried to enforce obedience to itself instead of adding to itself the attributes which people spontaneously obey. It adopted a policy of repression, which is usually the tyrant's first admission of failure, however unconsciously it is made. The more untenable its hold in the minds of men became, the more severe were its decrees. But in spite of this insurgency spread. The rebels were no longer an unorganized mob, but followed certain self-constituted leaders whom they obeyed spontaneously, enthusiastically. The tyrant next put a price upon the heads of these leaders, outlawing them in the name of Christian society. After they were outlawed, the leaders behaved as outlaws usually do, with utter disregard of the welfare of the society which had

cast them out. These leaders of pleasure have developed into the most abandoned and anti-social men of to-day.

The leaders in the domain of pleasure could exact any tribute they desired because they had the power to withhold from their followers the thing which made life worth living. They soon became tyrants of the worst sort. They were despots who had not learned to rule themselves. Their former willing followers became their subjects and later their slaves. The result was a large class of useless moths drawn hither and thither hypnotized by the glare of a light in the midst of the depressing darkness. This body of slaves of the lamp represents all classes of society, from the third story man to the stock gambler, from the gutter hog to the dandy who sips champagne at his club, from the street woman to the dancing, theatre-going, bejewelled belle. All are ready to give their last nickel as tribute to the lords of pleasure. One is willing to gamble or steal or go to the depths of infamy to obtain this tribute; another scruples no less to sit idle while the frail bodies of children or girls are warped for life and their souls

dwarfed for eternity in his factories, that he may bring more and more acceptable tribute to the feet of the lords of pleasure and thus stand high in the ranks of the faithful. For his position in this society rests entirely upon the amount of tribute which he brings.

It is Puritanism which has driven pleasure from the control of good citizens into the arms of demons who are ever ready to filch from the innocent his purity and from the youth his strength, and to charge dearly for their trouble.

In the sixteenth century, the people were told not to vex their brains about religion; the prince would attend to that. The princes tried to settle it, and the result was a century of religious war. In the seventeeth century, the people were told they were not to worry about government; the king would settle that for them. He tried to, and two centuries of war resulted. A little later, people were told to give up their pleasures; God would take care of that through His church. The result is the commercialization of recreation facilities by the lowest element in the community, and the natural and inevitable outcome of that is com-

mercialized vice, the greatest enemy of mankind.

NEO-PURITANISM

A few of the more precocious among the modern Puritans have long realized that there are certain misfits in present society. But these, they think, are unavoidable. The orthodox long ago saw these misfits, but traced them all without much investigation to "an inordinate love of pleasure." In their eyes, it was the evil nature of a man himself that made him sin, for which reason he alone should be punished. The "new light" Puritans realize that a misfit is not always the sin of the individual, and can weep copiously over the fate of Hester Prynne. They even sympathize with a drunken wretch and declaim, not against him, but against the demon who sold him the liquor. They do not blame the child for wanting to dance, but blame the person who keeps a dance hall. In their minds to overthrow the tyrants of pleasure is to destroy the kingdom of pleasure and vice, and to return to the good old days when men thought of nothing but things eternal.

This later or Neo-Puritanism is a great improvement over that of the stern patriarchs of the seventeenth century, but has missed the point by running to maudlin sentiment. Like Mrs. Jelleby, concerned for the natives of Africa to the neglect of everything else, her own family most of all, these sentimentalists have wasted tears and sympathy upon criminals, prostitutes, tramps, cripples, sick dependents, drunkards, and dwarfed children, and have never looked behind mere symptoms. Like the hog, they find the fallen acorns in the mud and pull them out, but never look up to see from where or why they fell. They are content to stand on the shore until the struggling person in the water is sent to the bottom by some insurmountable wave, and then weep for his death when a rope in time might have saved him.

The result of this run-to-seed sentiment has been the establishment of a host of correctional institutions and a flow of private charity never equaled before in any land. In fact, charity and relief have become a kind of sport.

There are others among these newer Puritans who see that a change has come about.

These deplore the change but accept it as a fact, and have introduced new tactics into the fight against sin. They still regret that man is so constituted that he must associate with his fellows and that he must have an outlet for his surplus energy and his animal spirits, but they are shrewder than the sentimentalists. They look deep enough to see that the adolescent is lost because he is not reached in time. It is better, they think, to flirt with evil and indulge him a little amusement than to let him go into commercialized halls to find the same thing or worse. So they condescend to establish a swimming pool or a gymnasium, or even allow a club of boys to meet providing it is thoroughly supervised. Then they try to present religion to him while he is off his guard by requiring him to attend Sunday school or by establishing a prayer-meeting next door.

The institutional church is built upon this plan. It furnishes a few of the simpler and less harmful amusements but is usually careful to see that no card game, dancing, or smoking is carried on, and always keeps the reminder of the church hanging like the sword of Damocles over the head of pleasure. These places

are always closed on Sunday and do not remain open late at night, thus forcing people out at the very time when they have the most leisure. Even this emasculated form of pleasure is condemned by many good people. Bishop Kilgo, of the Southern Methodist Church, is reported to have said, "The institutional church looks a case-hardened sinner in the eye and says, 'Go skin a cat.' "

The Y. M. C. A. and Y. W. C. A. have gone a step further than the institutional church and have provided homes for strangers in the city. But these organizations reach only a few people who can afford to pay yearly fees, and provide them with nothing but physical exercise and religious teaching, utterly disregarding all other forms of culture. All such institutions are good so far as they go, but do not go far enough. They all consider play merely a devious route for the soul. All play at their places stops on Sunday, when there is most leisure, and the insidious, ostentatious, handshaking interest in the inward feelings and strivings which one does not like to parade before every comer, drives a great many young people to places where there is less professed in-

terest and more real companionship.

This repression of the play spirit which is manifest in the institutional church and the Y. M. C. A. and Y. W. C. A. is only another phase of that which is found in the home. The policy of repression begins with the very young child. It shows its reaction in the family where Mother is afraid to allow Mary to play for fear she will take cold or get too warm or soil her white dress, and where Father tells Johnnie to keep quiet so he can read or to be careful not to incur a complaint from the janitor. A classic illustration is the case of the mother who said to the servant, "Jane, run out and see what the children are doing and tell them to stop." It never occurs to these fond parents to dress their children sensibly or to provide a clean place out of doors where they can play in peace with no thought of Father's reading or the neighbor's sleep. Instead of taking an active interest in the play of the children and directing it so as to use up their surplus energy and leave them better off, the parent sits like a much-imposed-upon and highly offended martyr uttering the monotonous refrain, "Don't do that." John enters

the room and slams the door. "Don't slam the door, John," says Mother. He starts to get on the bed. "Don't get on the bed," comes again from Mother, this time a little louder. John pokes the fire, gets out his wagon, plays soldier or train, and teases his little sister, each time the inevitable "Don't" coming a little louder and in a little higher key, until finally the exasperated child asks the frantic parent, "Well, Mother, what *may* I do?"

The child may be held in as long as he is kept at home, but as soon as he goes to school and out on the street, thus coming in contact with other children, he becomes irrepressible. The eternal hero in every child asserts itself. He finds that he is not sufficient unto himself and joins a gang. This gang is the first state. If its ideals and methods are corrupt, this must react upon the city of the next generation, and the effect of "bad company" upon the individual child is proverbial. The Boy Scouts have proved that there is also the possibility for good in this very gang, but there must be something wrong with a society in which a mother will say, "I dread to see my boy grow up and have to go out on the street. I can

manage him as long as he is small enough to keep at home, but when he gets out I never know where he is or what he is doing."

Not all homes are like the one we have described. There is a large body of intelligent parents who give time and money for the proper education and recreation of their children. The child of the well-to-do-home does not normally present a difficult problem. But it is the child whose mother and father work away from home all day, whose home is too dingy to stay in and, who is surrounded by ignorance, superstitition, want, and vice that presents the strongest challenge to the modern city.

Most spirited children resent the restrictions of the home and long for the time when they can enjoy the freedom of the street. The time comes, and they find that the policy of repression has not ceased to bind them, but has merely been taken over by the city. When the child gives vent to his desire for free play, the strong arm of the law falls upon him with the weight of lead. Baseball and burglary seem to be regarded by the city fathers as equally crimnal. The child soon learns to hate the

"cop" as an implacable enemy, and lawbreaking becomes a sport. Never too respectful of property, he soon becomes a real criminal, a social outcast, and before very long a social enemy.

By the thirtieth year a person has usually become either a respectable citizen or a reprobate. Many of the venturesome young spirits, those too strong to be bound by the petty conventions of society, the youths of fine temperament and the high strung child as well as the one who is mentally deficient, have in many cases become gamblers, drunkards, tramps, criminals, and prostitutes, all ruled out of society by the hard hand of law and respectability. On the other hand, the phlegmatic, ordinary, unsentimental, unimaginative, easily repressed child has, in most cases, become a respectable, machine-like individual who bothers no one and lets the old world take care of itself. He turns his head and feigns horror at the mention of the name of the outcast, who may be his superior though ruled out by a harsh, unnatural selection.

Thirty years later, the same contempt is visible, but the reason for it is less. For the

outcast, life is closing, a failure. His vigor is dissipated, and whereas he once was dangerous to society, he is now merely dependent upon it, a member of the great army of tramps and paupers which society must care for. For the respectable individual also the momentum of early youth is gone. He, too, has lost his physical vigor and has to accept with resignation his stooping shoulders or protruding abdomen. In the daily grind of business and the rush for wealth, he has either dropped behind in the last lap of the race or has been reduced to a narrow sottishness that is not far above that of the reprobate. He works hard until he is exhausted and then decides to take a rest, only to discover to his sorrow, that he has never learned to rest. Leisure has become more painful to him than work. He has mistaken the means of sustaining life for life itself. His life is a failure also.

Our bodies are so constructed that very little absolute rest is needed. A body of which every organ is tired might conceivably require absolute rest, but life, especially modern life, is so complex and work is so minutely subdi-

vided that most people are only partially tired at the end of the day. A few organs—as, in the case of the office man, the brain, the arm, and the eyes—may be exhausted; but throughout the day the greater part of the body has been storing up energy. This energy must be dissipated. Rest is out of the question. What most people require is a form of recreation which uses the active organs while making no demand on the exhausted ones. True recreation would supply an opportunity for the positive use of the organs which have been idle during work hours. What would be recreation for the office man might be labor for the laborer; and to sit idle and be entertained might be very enjoyable to a laborer, but would bore a high-strung business man.

If this is true of the adult, how much more is it true of the child, who is constantly bubbling over with energy? His whole system cries aloud for an outlet for this energy. No wise engineer would think of adding fuel constantly without affording some means of escape for the steam. This steam may be expended through work or through wasteful exhaust, but if both of these methods of escape

are closed the result is an explosion which usually results in great injury to everything near, the engine included. The same is true of the child, the escape for the steam taking the form of recreation.

KINDS OF RECREATION

There are three kinds of recreation; the spontaneous, the commercially organized, and the communally organized. All three types are to be seen everywhere around us, but we are able to decide which is best for a given environment only by the way it works.

1. SPONTANEOUS RECREATION: In the open country, the boy wanders here and there at will. He runs, throws stones, climbs trees, rides horses, shoots game, steals fruit, wrestles, fights, plays soldier or Indian, or even cuts down a neighbor's tree to get a 'possum, and is considered a normal, spirited boy. While his recreation is spontaneous and undirected, it is nevertheless wholesome and social. Population is so sparse in his neighborhood that no one is unpleasantly affected by his romping. His space is unlimited and there are no man-made lines to prevent his giving

full expression to his instincts, which are the surest guide to wholesome recreation. They are the demand of the various organs for use. The boy answers that demand with no feeling of compulsion, but with a feeling of freedom and joy unbounded. He is the savage, the true Arcadian spirit, the theme of the poets of all ages.

We have seen how the policy of repression has failed in our cities. We have shut up the steam chests, without work and without play, and the inevitable explosion has followed. And yet it is not entirely a mistake on the part of our fathers. They saw a truth, but lacked the imagination and foresight to discern the true meaning of that truth. As population increased in density, as people crowded together in great cities, everyone saw the need of curbing spontaneous amusement. Man-made restrictions arose on every hand without consideration for the welfare of the child, leaving him not "a single clod to call his own." The nature of the child has never changed. He is the perpetual savage, in revolt against restrictions, always reacting against the restraints of civilization. This incorrigible savage goes on

as millions before him have done, running, throwing, climbing, riding, stealing, fighting, and destroying, and is not a little surprised when the strong arm of public opinion and law, branding him the savage which he is, reduces him from his self-constituted position of hero to that of outwardly proclaimed outlaw.

In the city, the child finds that there is not room enough for each individual to have his separate sphere, that all paths are narrow and interwoven, and that when anyone deviates from his regular path, he immediately interferes with the rights of others. To run may mean to collide with some pedestrian; to throw may mean to break a window; to destroy property may mean irretrievable loss. What our fathers before us discovered we can not now deny, that recreation entirely spontaneous and undirected is impossible in a great city.

But in our cities, no place has been provided for the outlet of this youthful spirit, this surplus energy, and the failure to do this, reinforced by a stern policy of repression, has brought a bounteous harvest of vice and crime. Here is a list of "crimes" taken from

the records of the Juvenile Court of Chicago, for which boys were arrested in that city. Most of them show merely a desire for adventure, the hero spirit:—

Building fires along the railroad tracks.

Flagging trains.

Throwing stones at car windows.

Shooting at actors in the Olympic Theatre with sling shots.

Breaking signal lights on the railroad.

Stealing linseed oil from the railroad to make a fire.

Taking waste from an axle box and burning it upon the tracks.

Turning a switch and running a street car off the track.

Staying away from home to sleep in barns.

Setting fire to a barn to see the fire engine come up the street.

Knocking down signs.

Cutting a Western Union cable.

Numbers of other "crimes" fall into this same class, as for example, "flipping" cars, stealing a bathing suit, sleeping out at night, getting wandering spells, stealing vehicles to take a ride, and so on. All these show a spirit

of pure adventure or an admixture of adventure with a lack of respect for property, which is common to children and savages. Wandering is a favorite method of giving vent to the lust for adventure and of ridding oneself of the repression of the home. Boys below fourteen years of age have been known to travel thousands of miles. But this habit is disappearing with the coming of moving pictures and the vanishing of get-rich-quick schemes. Fire arms and drugs are the last phase of this perverted lust for adventure.

As Joseph Lee says, "The call of the eternal hero in the youth compels him to leave the soft and easy ways, and such as are of good repute among his maiden aunts, and to venture upon exploits for which we blame him. Sir Launcelot rides forth every day upon our streets and the next morning the judge says, 'Twenty Days.' "

But unfair as our present system may seem, we cannot go back to spontaneous amusement. It is unsuited to modern conditions; the present congestion forbids it. It is expensive in property, life, and character. The control of leisure has become too big a problem for the

individual or even the family to solve. We must find another way of converting the child from savagery to civilization without our present waste of life and genius.

2. RECREATION COMMERCIALLY ORGANIZED: Spontaneous recreation and its sequel, puritanical repression, have failed utterly, as we have seen, and in the wake of failure has come the camp follower, commerce, gathering together those choice bits of art and charm which could be most easily disguised and which would bring the largest returns, and leaving the less valuable but no less essential fragments to waste on the field.

Yet leisure organized commercially is better than leisure repressed. Commerce will give anything the public demands. It will provide drama noble enough to enrapture artists, but it will with no less hesitation steal an innocent girl from the street to meet the demands of a male hyena who has the price. Some wonderful art has come to us through commercialized institutions, but the lowest expressions of human perversion can be had with equal convenience and with less expense. Two blocks from two of the finest theatres in Chi-

cago are to be found basement shows displaying the most hideous gyrations of "Oriental Dancers." Commerce must do the thing which pays it the best. At best you buy art, at worst you give your hard-earned money for nothing, or what is worse than nothing, mental poison. Generally speaking, commerce brooks no conscience, but panders to the grosser passions of humanity because these are the most lurid, the most immediate. This fact has intensified our taboo of pleasure and, driving the good people from recreation, has turned it over to the lowest members of the community. As a consequence the commercialized organization of recreation is to-day the greatest failure of our whole system.

Says Miss Jane Addams in her little book, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Street*:

"Since the soldiers of Cromwell shut up the people's playhouses and destroyed their pleasure fields, the Anglo-Saxon city has turned over the provision for public recreation to the most evil-minded and most unscrupulous members of the community. We see thousands of girls walking up and down the streets on a pleasant evening with no

chance to catch a sight of pleasure even through a lighted window, save as these lurid places (commercial dance halls) provide it. Apparently the modern city sees in these young people only two possibilities, both of them commercial; first a chance to utilize by day their new and tender labor power in its factories and shops, and then another chance in the evening to extract from them their petty wages by pandering to their love of pleasure.

"Is it only the artists who really see these young creatures as they are—the artists, who are themselves endowed with immortal youth? Is it our disregard of the artists' message which makes us so blind and so stupid, or are we so under the influence of our Zeitgeist that we can only detect commercial motives in the young as well as the old? It is as if our eyes were holden to the mystic beauty, the redemptive joy, the civic pride which these multitudes of young people might supply to our dingy cities."

It would be impossible to treat all of the illegitimate excesses of commercialization, for volumes have been written on crime, gambling dens, houses of prostitution, and opium dives.

Only a few of the more legimate and more popular of the commercialized type deserve our attention here. While others are equally interesting, we shall here consider only the saloon, the dance hall, the amusement park, the excursion boat, and the theatre.

a. The Dance Hall: First let us look at dance halls. To move the limbs rhythmically is as much a part of human nature and consequently as irrepressible as the use of the voice to produce harmony, and is capable of as great artistic development. From time immemorial the dance has been one of the most important expressions of the life of the people, and on the continent of Europe this is still the case. There was never anything purer than the old folk dances on the village green, where mother and daughter, sister and brother danced together. Witness Goldsmith's description of one of these:

"How often have I blest the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labor free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree,

While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old surveyed;
And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,
And sleights of art and feats of strength went
around.
And still as each repeated pleasure tired,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired;
The dancing pair that simply sought renown,
By holding out to tire each other down."

Dancing properly conducted is wholesome, exhilarating exercise and an excellent stimulant to social enjoyment. When girls learned to dance at home, the public might properly adopt a *laissez-faire* policy towards it, but the opposition of the church has long since driven it from that shrine of innocence into the halls and secret places which commerce provides. The consequence is that the dance hall now rivals the saloon in immorality. Compare this from Miss Addams with Goldsmith's description:

"Huge dance halls are opened to which hundreds of young people are attracted, many of whom stand wistfully outside a roped circle, for it takes five cents to procure for five min-

utes the sense of allurement and intoxication which is sold in lieu of innocent pleasure. These coarse and illicit merrymakings remind one of the unrestrained merrymakings of Restoration London, and they are indeed their descendants, properly commercialized, still confusing joy with lust and gaiety with dedauchery."

An investigating committee in New York a few years ago found two-thirds of the 600 dance halls in the city undesirable. Liquor is sold in them almost without exception, and the annual attendance is from four million to five million. In many communities, dances are organized entirely for profit by clever young fellows known by such names as "Jimmie the Wolf" or the "Jolly Twisters," and from $200 to $500 is not an uncommon profit for a night. The greater part of this amount comes from drinks. In Chicago, it was found that in 198 out of 264 dance halls it was impossible to get a drink of water. Some halls offer a prize to the girl who at the end of a month can show the largest number of drinks consumed.

In the better dance halls watchmen and ma-

trons are placed upon the floor to prohibit improper dancing. Here the dances are usually about ten minutes long with four-minute intermissions. In the lower places, leaders are kept on the floor to set the pace in fast dancing; the time of the dances is shortened to four minutes and the intermission is lengthened to fifteen; and sometimes 2000 complimentary tickets are given away to enlarge the crowd and stimulate drinking. Dances given by organizations are generally worse than those given by the so-called stationary halls.

The four factors contributing most in making these places bad are:—

1. The type of dancing allowed.
2. The drinking, especially drunkenness.
3. The ease of getting acquainted.
4. The character of the persons attending.

It is very common in these halls to see people lying around drunk on the floor, couples spooning, girls sitting on men's laps, and men fighting to the accompaniment of obscene language, rasping music, and hideous dancing.

Another evil is mashing, although this is probably exaggerated. At one of the large dance halls in Milwaukee, of 211 girls who

were counted entering one night, 68 or 32 per cent. had escorts; of 221 who were counted as they left, 103 or 47 per cent. had escorts. Fifteen per cent. had picked up escorts, and if you take the percentage of unescorted who found beaux, the percentage enlarges. When you consider those who were "picked up" for a dance or two and dropped, the number approaches 100 per cent. Why should a girl go unescorted if not to meet men? You rarely see one girl dancing with another girl at such a place.

The fact is, to meet men is largely what they go for. It is the only place provided for it. To the poor friendless girl and the newly arrived boy, the seething mass of strangers makes a city a wilderness more desolate than the woods. A bitter loneliness overcomes them. No one notices them or helps them get acquainted. What means all this mass of human beings if there is no friend in it? They must meet some young people or the consequence will be fatal. So, by mutual consent, young people waive formalities and get acquainted. Some of these acquaintances are for purely social purposes—to relieve loneliness—

and result in permanent friendship or marriage; others are evil and the result is obvious —the white slave traffic being the worst expression of this. The dance hall is informal and affords the best opportunity for "mashing."

Miss Addams tells a story which illustrates this point very well. "One Sunday night, I had occasion to go into a large dance hall. As I stood by the rail looking for the girl I had come to find, a young man approached me and quite simply asked me to introduce him to some 'nice girl,' saying that he did not know anyone there. On my replying that a public dance hall was not the best place in which to look for a nice girl, he said, 'But I don't know any other place where there is a chance to meet one of any kind. I'm awfully lonesome since I came to Chicago.' "

"Mashing" is not the crime that our guardians of the peace would have us believe. It is quite common in this country and much more so in the large cities of Europe. I found by a questionaire given to some Civics students in a high school in Indianapolis that 50 per cent. of the girls and 85 per cent. of the boys had made acquaintances informally. Now if

this is true of high school students from good families, in a city of a quarter of a million where they have lived all their lives, what can we expect of strangers in a great metropolis? But "mashing" is dangerous as a social practice and should be stopped, not by prohibition but by the substitution of a common meeting ground for boys and girls. A dance hall, if properly managed, might be made to supply this need very well.

In a questionaire given in 1911, to 1253 New York school children between ten and fourteen years of age, it was found that 813 or 64 per cent. danced. Girls made up the majority of this number. The following table shows where they learned and where they danced:

Where they	Home	School	Institutions	Academies and Affairs	Total
Learned ...	19%	31%	8%	42%	100%
Danced	9%	29%	6%	57%	100%

This table is unreliable for the reason that it takes mere children and leaves out those not attending school. If the figures were amassed for youths a little older both in and out of

school, the absolute percentage would undoubtedly be larger, but the fourth column would still be out of proportion to the others. That is to say, more children of high school age would be in attendance at academies and dance halls than at the age here considered. As it is, the table shows that almost half of these mere children learn at academies and more than half of them dance there.

The dance academy is slightly different from the public dance hall and usually a little better. In 1911, the Committee on Amusements and Vacation Resources of Working Girls in New York found that 56 per cent. of the dancing academies on Manhattan Island were good, or at least not bad, while 44 per cent. were positively bad. It was also found that 45 per cent. of the pupils were under 16 years of age and 90 per cent. under 21, and that 100,000 pupils pay for attendance each year. Thus, while private dancing academies are neither so immoral nor so well attended as the public dance halls, their capacity for evil is almost as great because they deal with people in the formative period.

b. The Saloon: The brunt of the whole

attack on commercialized amusements has fallen upon the saloon. If one is to believe its opponents, all the evils of the home and the factory, of amusements and politics; all the white slavery; all gambling, bad dance halls, rough shows, and crooked politics are indirectly traceable to the saloon. Whether this is true is of small concern here. Paint the picture as black as you will, and the dismaying fact remains that the saloon thrives because of its good qualities rather than its bad ones.

The saloon, as has often been said, is the poor man's club. He can join for a nickel and receive the value of his nickel back in a glass of beer. Here the lights are bright and the music is lively, in marked contrast to the dingy, cold, cheerless home. The tired, overworked laborer enters unobtrusively No one meets him at the door with a clammy hand-shake and a stereotyped inquiry into the health of his wife and family. No one bustles around to see that he is amused. No one makes any strained attempt at intimacy. Instead, there is real companionishp, real informal camaraderie. This plebian clubman makes no pretensions, awaits no introduction, but speaks to his

neighbor as man to man, as if he had been an acquaintance all his life. The conversation of the two is distinctly elementary, and their mental conflicts are primitive, but they do not wish them otherwise. The saloon survives because it is democratic, informal, and cheerful; because it answers a need in the lives of laborers which nothing else has yet answered.

However, the saloon is fast succumbing to the attacks of its outside enemies, and is bound to go. The question is, shall we leave vacant the leisure time, and unsatisfied the social inclination of the millions of people who daily crowd our saloons? When the saloon was driven out of the South, the negroes almost immediately began to take drugs that were more deadly than alcohol. The ignorant laborer everywhere is willing to do anything to relieve the deadly monotony of existence. Obviously, the only way to get permanently rid of the saloon is to absorb its good points and let the evil go the way of all evil before the bar of public opinion. The moment the poor man can find a club as unpretentious, as democratic, and as cheerful as the saloon, the saloon issue will be dead.

c. The Amusement Park: Of the street carnival and the amusement park, little need be said. A committee of the City Club of Milwaukee estimated in 1914 that it cost about a cent a minute, or the same as it would to occupy a $1.50 seat in a theatre, to attend a street carnival. At the carnival at the Milwaukee state fair in 1914, there were 43 attractions including 20 games for prizes, 9 freak exhibits, 8 miscellaneous attractions, and 6 oriental and girl shows. It is almost beyond dispute that these shows are run by the most immoral people in a fashion that is revolting to even the most ignorant and degraded types of humanity. One only has to stand at the door of an oriental show to read disgust and shame on the face of the victims as they file out.

The amusement park ranks a little higher in the type of amusements offered, but at the same time is more expensive. The scenic railway ride costs from two to eight cents per minute or from $1.25 to $5.00 an hour; the merry-go-round costs a cent a minute; and other shows, from one to three cents a minute. Most of these attractions cannot depend upon their own allurement, but must send hawkers out

into the crowd to inveigle innocent passersby to patronize them. This they do by misrepresentation, by feats of skill, by keeping pretty girls standing in front and taking them in occasionally, by calling on girls to make their escorts take them in, and even occasionally by stopping and pulling in possible patrons. Usually most of the show is on the outside. However, there is little about these amusements that is immoral; most of them are too repulsive to be even suggestive. The worst charge against them is that they take advantage of the gregarious instinct of humanity to take money for nothing. The shows are at best unattractive, at worst expensive and repulsive. And yet they are profitable. Riverview Exposition, in Chicago, declared a dividend of 60 per cent. in 1912, and one of 50 in 1913, with an attendance of millions of people.

But no one would think of going to one of these places when the crowd is not there. If the crowd could be collected by any other and better means than these under bright lights and with gay sounds, the attraction would be just as great without exacting any expenditure comparable to that demanded under present

conditions. The amusement park simply charges the lonely individual "admission" to the crowd. It is like placing a toll gate across the street. Has the crowd not a legal and natural right to collect free? Then why not let it collect and encourage it to do so? If the average person is assured that a crowd will be found in a given place, he will be there to join it. In European cities and in some cities of this country, notably New Orleans, St. Louis, Los Angeles, and Indianapolis, there are held several times a year parades and other festivities which bring practically the whole population down town. At such times each one leaves with a feeling of satisfaction, and not with the disgust which follows ugly shows and wasted money.

d. The Excursion Boat: Only one trip is necessary on the ordinary short-trip excursion boat to see that a dreadful state of immorality reigns. Drinking, spooning, tough dancing, and coarse loud talk are the rule on the night boats. The day boats, pretending to get you away from the noise of the city, are infested with hawkers who sing ragtime songs with rasping voices and pass the hat around, or who

cry their wares—peanuts, cracker jack, Coca Cola, and beer—in your face, making the heart of the city seem a far more enjoyable place by comparison. One of their favorite tricks is to approach an unsophisticated young couple, insisting that the girl wishes the entire miscellaneous contents of their baskets and that the boy is "no sport" or a "cheap skate" if he does not buy them for her. These boats are usually crowded beyond capacity with rough people not properly policed, who have made the excursion boat a synonym of vulgarity.

Last summer the *Eastland,* a Chicago excursion boat, turned over while tied to the wharf and drowned a great host of excursionists within fifty feet of land. It was found that the ballast had been removed and that an immense throng had been crowded aboard. The officers had been warned that the boat was leaning, but nevertheless continued crowding people aboard. Chicago put on mourning; the world was horrified; good resolutions were made. Investigations were instituted to find the cause, but the real cause was missed. The *Eastland* disaster was the sad but logical out-

come of the commercialization of excursion facilities. Even our conservative newspapers realize that. At least four big Chicago dailies had a cartoon of the monster greed overturning the *Eastland*. The owners were blamed, but it was no fault of theirs; they were human. The inspectors were accused, but they were helpless. It was merely the logical conclusion of our system. It was not the first and, despite our good intentions and resolutions, it will not be the last accident from the same cause.

e. The Theatre: Drama is as old as the race itself and the theatre is as old as civilization. Despite its primeval origin, the dramatic instinct does not decrease but rather increases with the growth of civilization. It may be curbed by self-restraint, but as the imagination of people is more and more stimulated by their complex environment, their desire for drama increases. As work becomes more monotonous and less appealing to the imagination, play must become more unreal and imaginative.

To the Oriental, life is a drama. He lives and acts as if he were on a stage. The drama was so bound up with the life of the Greeks

that it became a sacrilege to profane it. The mediaeval peasant would stand for hours listening to Punch and Judy or the old Morality plays. The Elizabethan Londoner found drama the most interesting diversion of his life. But the Anglo-Saxon, always sober and self-restrained, never felt so keenly as his southern cousins the instinct for drama. So he did not openly resent the prohibitions of the Puritans, and when the Puritan parliament closed up the playhouses it was apparently with the good will of the people.

In America the theatre is comparatively new. It naturally suffered in colonial and later days from the stern, puritanical character and habits of the pioneer Americans, but the spark was merely dormant, smothered by prohibitions, and not dead. Now, however, our attitude is rapidly changing. We are so hungry that we will take anything at all and pay dearly for it. New York spends over a half-million dollars a week for theatres, and the weekly attendance is 1,760,000 (1911). Even in sober, staid America, the theatre is coming to its own with a vengeance.

In Europe, there is little distinction in price

in theatres; in America a distinct line is drawn between low-priced and high-priced theatres. Among the former, we may place moving pictures, vaudeville, burlesque, and melodrama; among the latter, drama, musical comedy, concerts, and opera.

Abe Martin, the famous Hoosier philosopher, says, "Our homes must 'a bin awful congested before the movies came." Moving picture shows are attended more largely than all other forms of drama combined. Out of the 1,760,000 attendants at theatres in New York each week, 900,000 go to the "movies."

The moving picture has been the butt of a great deal of hostile criticism and the victim of some enlightened censorship. Artists say it is inartistic; moralists say it is immoral, while psychologists and physicians say it is otherwise harmful to people, especially to children. But, as we shall see, the harm in moving pictures comes from abusing or carrying them to excess. Too much candy or too much work might be equally harmful to a child, although neither is bad in itself.

A great deal has been said about the motion picture melodrama. Our censors do not allow

prize fight scenes or race riots or massacres to be depicted, but still allow wild west and Indian scenes. One Sunday afternoon, an investigation made of 476 theatres in Chicago showed that in the majority of cases the main theme of the pictures was revenge. Boys, especially foreigners, tend to imitate and emulate the acts seen on the screen. A boy sees a hold-up and attempts to imitate it with the milkman or a peddler as victim. An eminent Chicago alienist attributes a large share of neurotic diseases in children to overstimulation from constantly attending picture theatres. Personally, I attribute the recent marked increase in the amount and proficiency of spooning to the inevitable final scene in the pictures.

There is a rapidly growing belief among people competent to judge that the moving picture has wide artistic possibilities. For a long time nothing seriously pretending to be artistic was attempted upon films, but within the last three years there has been a revolution in the type of plays offered and a great rush for good actors. Modern books and plays have been rewritten or recast for films and

have met with a degree of success. But the great artistic possibility of pictures lies in two things, the beauty of scenery and the change of atmosphere. A vivid imagination may convert a paper desert with a plank floor into the Sahara, but a child cannot resist when the movies take him into the midst of a real desert with real camels and Arabs and palm trees. Shakespeare's Julius Caesar struts unconvincingly before American electric lights, to the accompaniment of artificially produced thunder; but who can resist the alabaster temple, the real Vesuvius, the actual ships, soldiers, and tents, even the real Scipio, of "Cabiria?"

Pictures are educational as the stage can never be, and, taken in moderation, stimulate the imagination. But in order to defeat their competitors, the melodrama and vaudeville, they have had to adopt the tactics of these and are the worse for it, artistically and morally. There is not much question, however, that Charlie Chaplin is of a higher type than the old circus clown.

But good or bad, the movies are here to stay and are growing more rapidly than any other form of amusement. They are distinct-

ly of the people. In a poor school in New York, it was found that 62 per cent. of the children between 10 and 14 years of age went to see them once a week or oftener; 16 per cent. went daily. In a high-priced girls' school 74 per cent. never went at all.

Pictures have great possibilities, but have not always lived up to them. Cities, states and nation have found it necessary to establish boards of censors to do more efficiently what public opinion and the police could do in the case of the more slow-moving stage companies. Now the volume of work has become so great that it is impossible for a body to do its work properly without untold expense. Why should the government go to this great expense for censoring and let all the profit go to commerce? The establishment of a censorship is a plain admission that private production of pictures has failed. There is certainly something wrong with an institution that has to be continually watched to keep it from betraying and ruining the people upon whom its life depends.

Melodrama is gone; burlesque is passing, and with it will go one of the most objectiona-

ble forms of drama. Here, the humor is coarse, crude, and suggestive. The company is generally recruited from street girls. Compensation for the lack of plot is generally made in the form of excessive exposure of person. To be sure, this might go unnoticed if we could get rid of some of our prudery about women and women's dress; if we could get a decent pride in our bodies and teach children that there is nothing about a woman's body to be ashamed of. If we could teach them the real truth about sex, there would be a marked diminution of the curiosity which takes people to burlesque shows. But Puritanism forbids us to make these changes and thereby pulls down upon its own head the blame for the existence and continuance of burlesque.

Burlesque is dying, not like the melodrama, but by absorption. Both the moving pictures and the high-priced theatres have adopted its tactics. Frequently one sees a newly painted sign in front of a picture house, "Children under 10 years of age not admitted." Such a place is always crowded, and the crowd generally files out disappointed. The sign is simply an advertising scheme. Everyone knows

that children under ten years of age would not understand anything tabooed, but not everyone knows that children remember and await with longing the day when they can go to the places from which they have been so rigorously excluded during their early years. Such exhibitions as the Winter Garden shows, the Follies, the Passing Shows, Maid in America, and others are simply burlesque with more expensive clothes and fewer of them, on a background of more light and noise. Burlesque shows plainly the evil of allowing mercenaries to cater to the lowest interest of weak-minded people for no other purpose than to rob them of their money.

Vaudeville is usually an inharmonious combination of stupid, empty acts. It may at first appeal to one as interesting, but after a dozen performances a person of average intelligence is usually disgusted. Most vaudeville audiences appear bored. Yet the attendance is second only to that of moving pictures (about 700,000 a week in New York). Vaudeville reflects the streets in all their ugliness and weakness, and the streets, in turn, reflect vaudeville. I am not unacquainted with street

life, and yet I have listened to conversations between young people which were almost unintelligible. I have heard groups talk for hours without saying half a dozen connecetd sentences. The conversation was mostly slapstick comedy interspersed with coarse, meaningless slang. Conversation is becoming a lost art, largely through the influence of the vaudeville stage. Vaudeville emphasizes the weaknesses and peculiarities of humanity; it overdoes the coarser phases of humor and leads to neurasthenia or restlessness. We all recognize that humor is valuable and desirable, but the stock of it is limited, and vaudeville tends to exhaust even that. Most vaudeville acts are based on physical prowess, the sex instinct, or humor. The first can be replaced by amateurs in gymnasia, the second elevated, and the third limited.

One charge against vaudeville is the monotony of it. There is little imagination in the acts themselves, and still less in their arrangement on the program. There is no harmony, no climax, no order. I went last summer to see what was reputed to be the best bill put

on in Chicago during the season. No less than five successive acts were a weak attempt at singing, dancing, and coarse humor. One of the star acts was sleight of hand, the other an adaptation from "Zaza" which was a mixture of a weak introduction and a nerve-racking conclusion that left one in anything but good condition to appreciate some expert bicycle riding and "nutty" comments on the program afterward. By the time the bill was finished I was bored to extinction, though I saw no harm in it. But if vaudeville is not moral, it is not immoral; it is unmoral. It is also inartistic and unattractive. It stays because it is a cheap ever present solvent for loneliness.

The New York committee before referred to rated burlesque as five-sixths demoralizing and one-sixth lowering; vaudeville as three-fourths not objectionable, one-fifth lowering, and one-twentieth positively valuable; moving pictures as one-half positively valuable and the other half not objectionable. In all these places the boys and men in the audience outnumber the women and girls two to one. Is this because they are unclean or are they un-

clean because of this? Partly both, I think.*

As for our best theatres, the greatest trouble with them is the prohibitive price. This practically excludes all except the wealthy and those who are willing to brave public opinion by taking a cheap seat. An investigation in New York showed that the average audience is made up of 51 per cent. leisure class, 45 per cent. business class, 2 per cent. working class, and 2 per cent. children. This does not mean that only those go who can appreciate the performance. A great many "sports" go to "take women, to see women, and to seek prey," and these manifestly do not understand enough to keep quiet during the performance . A few years ago in St. Louis, John McCormack had to ask some "box warmers" to keep quiet. But such conduct is proverbial.

The better theatres may run successfully shows which are either good or bad, as the last year has proved. But no matter how great the idealism on the inside, there are always the thorns of commercialism in the box office on

*Without doubt we can attribute the objectionable prevalence of ragtime song to vaudeville houses. The poor in America never hear any good music.

the outside. The prices usually range from two dollars down; and it is well understood now that the best seats are given to hotels and agencies for extra profit. Besides this, if you wish to be respectable, you must take a taxicab and wear a dress suit. This adds fully ten dollars to the night's expenses, for the rate for taxicabs is about ten times as high per mile as that of the finest train in the United States.

A severe charge against some commercial theatres is that they do not advertise honestly, but subsidize favorable critics and refuse admittance to unfavorable ones, thus depriving the people of a chance to boycott plays which are not worth while. Most critics are so much enslaved by this that they take pains to couch their criticisms in neatly worded but utterly meaningless expressions which leave the untutored man more bewildered than before. The recent decision of the courts of New York in the case of the Times vs. the Schubert theatres has called the attention of the country to this situation.

It is charged also that the theatre does not properly interpret nature, but presents only

the worst in it. This I do not know. But, good or bad, the theatre is even more of a necessity to the overworked laborer than to the dandy, for it is only those who do physical labor who should sit idle and be entertained. In Italy, laborers listen to grand opera; in Germany, a mark buys a seat which is not at all bad. No wonder that foreign cab drivers can whistle opera as easily as the American whistles rag. Why is it not the same way in America? Why do we deny "the house of dreams" to those who have little else but dreams, and poor ones at that?

Chances for Amusement: A survey of a district of 193.9 acres in the lower east side of New York city, in which there were 13,956 school children, showed the following chances for amusement:

Saloons	78	Public schools	8
Candy shops and stands	188	Evening recreation centres	2
Soda water stands	73	Synagogues	7
Barber shops	125	Churches	2
Lunch and rest rooms	100	Mission	1
Theatre (Yiddish)	1	Benevolent institutions	4
Moving picture shows	8*	Jail	1
Dance academies and halls	9	Settlements	4
Pool rooms	10	Public batns	1
Meeting halls	7	Public libraries	1
Vacant lot (very small)	1	Play ground	0

*This was taken in 1909. Very likely much greater now.

The following compendium was made by Dr. Michael M. Davis* of Columbia University after a long study of the condition of amusement in New York. It shows where people spend most of their leisure time and the age at which interest begins.

Fundamental Institutions.	Unorganized or commercially organized recreative provisions. Interest begins.	Public or philanthropic Recreation.	Main age divisions
Home	Street Play Candy Shop	Park Playground Settlement	10 years
	Moving Picture Show Penny Arcade Ice Cream Parlor	Church House Recreation Centre Library	14 years
Street	Dance Academy Cheap Theatre	Lecture Centre Museum Y. M. C. A., etc. Athletic field	16 years
School	Skating Rink Dance Hall Excursion Boat Pool Room		18 years
Workshop	Meeting Hall Shooting Gallery Billiard Parlor		21 years
	Saloon Theatre		

*Michael M. Davis, The Exploitation of Pleasure. Russell Sage Foundation paper (child hygiene dept.) No. 84, page 6. Most of the statistics about New York city and many others are taken from this little paper.

From these charts we see that commerce has begun with the child in the candy shop and has followed him through to settled maturity. In the second table there are only six recreative institutions which are operated by the city, and of these most cities furnish only two. Parks, playgrounds, and athletic fields are closed during the winter. The rest of the column reaches so small a number of people as to be almost negligible. Most of the opportunities for public free recreation are unattractive to a great many young people.

The same cannot be said of the private recreative institutions, for their existence depends upon their attraction. Commercialized amusements are not only attractive, but the lure of them is constantly before the eye. Their advertisements are seductive and are conspicuously placed upon every corner, while the public amusements never advertise and are usually unobtrusive. Public facilities, even in summer, are closed early in the evening, while all winter long commercial amusements keep open till as late an hour as the public desires to attend.

Commercialism characterizes almost every form of recreation. The candy shop is run

to catch the child's pennies. The cafe is a common among the foreign element. The lodge, church, and club are mutual rather than commercial, but many of these have prohibitive fees. The summer resort is the most highly developed of all commercial institutions in its ability to reduce bank accounts. All these and many others are not the lowest perversions of commercialism, but are rather its flower. To trace it to its lowest depths would lead us beyond the pale of decency, even to the breaking of the postal laws.

Failure of Commercialized Recreation: Commercialized recreation has failed as surely as did its predecessor, spontaneous recreation. The main causes of its failure and therefore the main arguments against it follow: (1) it has promoted and sustained vice; (2) it has contributed to bring about an inordinate love of wealth; (3) it has caused a dearth of art; and (4) it has failed to supply the community with the recreative facilities it truly desires. All these charges should have been clearly substantiated by what has already been said, but let us repeat.

Money Cause of Wrong Pleasures: It is

an axiom that vice is nothing more than a perverted love of pleasure. It is private exploitation which paves the way from innocent fun to the worst forms of evil. It is the power of money which keeps human beings in bondage to habits which are loathsome. Drunkenness is the result of the saloon. Crime is largely the result of a desire for money and of our habit of rearing children among vicious surroundings. All the long list of sexual perversions results from the stimulation caused by indecent amusements and the power of money.

The organizers of our amusements are, as we have seen, largely social outcasts. What could you expect from them except evil amusements? No one would be willing to trust a saloon-keeper with the rearing of his child. We hire experts with unimpeachable reputations to train the minds of our children for the few hours they are in school, and then keep a strict censorship over the instruction; and yet we allow the play of the child to be directed by the vilest members of the community and never ask any questions. We totally disregard the principle that play, action, and concrete illustrations are more influential

in the formative period of the child's life than the mere precepts which he gets in school. Perhaps you are a good Puritan and keep your child away from pernicious places, but the other children of the community go and then associate with your child. The home can never be pure until the amusements outside of the home are pure. The child will never be safe until the places which he is most tempted to go to are safe. The preponderance of virtue or vice in the next generation will be almost entirely determined by the type of men who control our recreation in this generation.

Some time ago a friend and I spent an hour in a Greek coffee house in Indianapolis where there were some Greeks we knew. We were almost overwhelmed with "set-ups" in this short hour, and were at loss to understand why people to whom we were comparative strangers should vie with those who knew us in "setting 'em up." We soon discovered that it was simply a foolish attempt to show us that they were "sports," mixed perhaps with a desire to please us by showering us with gifts. This seems to be one of the first things immigrants learn in America.

Americans are known to Europeans as a money-loving people, and the charge has a large element of truth in it. We have sacrificed culture, art, science, and even human life in our reckless rush for wealth. We deify the successful man, the railroad magnate, or the steel king, and laugh at the artist and the professor. America is as truly ruled by a plutocracy as Russia is by an aristocracy.

Americans worship wealth because they aspire to become wealthy themselves. And why do they aspire to wealth so strongly? Why are they willing to forget art, science, and philosophy in a mad rush for gold, which normally should be only an instrument to enjoyment? It is because they have such expensive leisure. It is necessary to have money to have the simplest amusements, and more money to be able to enjoy the more attractive ones. This has resulted in a mad race for wealth and a crude display in spending it. If Jones has a new automobile every spring, Smith must have one also; if Jones buys a yacht, Smith must have one; if Jones has a box seat at the theatre, Smith must not sit among the rabble. Like the Greeks in the coffee house, each is trying

to keep his social position by a mere display of money. Perhaps Smith hates a dress suit and would prefer a less conspicuous position, but he feels that he must keep up appearances.

The race for appearance extends down to the lowest members of society. The shop girl who tries to make her beau take her to amusements which neither of them can afford, not because she enjoys it but because she wants to tell her friends how much money she made him spend on her, is merely emulating the example of Smith. The greatest cause of this situation is the graduation in the prices of our amusements. Who would care to give up everything in a wild race for wealth if here, as in Europe, a poor person could sit beside him at the theatre and share all amusements equally with him? What we need most is an equality of leisure, which is the only real equality.

If America is a money-loving country it is also a country without art. We use our money to visit the art centres of Europe and to import the choicest specimens that Europe affords, but we have never produced a native art. Instead of learning to sing, we have pre-

ferred to import a Caruso. Instead of encouraging our native painters, our Morgans go abroad and buy old masters with their millions. All of our talent has run to making money. We have produced wizards in business, but we have never produced artists. We have no large body of amateurs from which artists may rise. Meanwhile ignorant Americans have been shamefully cheated both at home and abroad. They have either left their walls bare or had them decorated by ludicrous conglomerations of inartistic paintings. They have listened to ragtime song until they know no other, and, as we have seen, their theatrical productions have been expensive and without artistic design. But what has commerce to do with this dearth of art? Commerce supplies what the people think they desire and so fills their time that they cannot come to a realization of what they actually crave. Why should the people be blamed?

Commerce satisfies the lower desire: It is doubtful whether the modern theatre, for instance, supplies the wants of even its most faithful supporters, but that we will not question. A man is a bundle of desires. Now sup-

pose he has for a moment just two wishes, one to see or hear something really artistic and uplifting and the other to see something low or suggestive. Either desire satisfied will exclude the other. Commerce sees its opportunity to profit by furnishing him something to satisfy one of these desires. Needless to say it will provide the amusement which costs less and which satisfies more quickly. It is much cheaper to provide a short skirt, tights, and a few suggestive jokes than to engage real artists to perform. The former device also has the advantage of furnishing something elemental, physical, and easily assimilated, while the latter provides what is indirect, psychic, and hard to assimilate. One plan pleases immediately, the other requires appreciation. If offered meat and sugar, a child will always choose the sugar because the enjoyment of it is immediate, while the benefit of the meat is deferred. People attend questionable places because they are cheap, convenient, and easily appreciated. Then there is a certain amount of dare-devilism in the young blood who enters one of these places. Commerce takes advantage of these tendencies of mankind and

caters to them, thus weakening rather than strengthening the individual.

Even in the first class theatre there is this same element of suggestion, and, as the Winter Garden shows have proved, this is very popular. But this is no stronger argument than to say that because school children seem to prefer throwing chalk to studying Latin and mathematics, they should be allowed to throw chalk.

Commerce supplies only those amusements which yield immediate returns in dollars and cents. Commerce would never build up a free school system, a playground, a library, an art museum, an athletic field for amateurs, or a decent club house. It must confine its energies and capital to the things which pay, and leave the institutions which bring no cash return to be provided by the city. It has given us only those amusements and educational institutions which are lurid, and has left the burden of uplift on the city. It has dismally failed to meet the real needs of the people to which it caters. How could failure be more complete?

Greatly increased leisure: We are horri-

fied when we hear that people once worked regularly sixteen or eighteen hours a day, and yet there was not intense suffering on account of this. I have seen farm hands work fifteen hours a day for an entire summer without any apparent injury. There is no problem of leisure here because there is no leisure. All such a person demands is rest. On the other hand, I have seen miners work through a long summer's day until it looked as if they would be prostrated by the heat, and then play baseball for two hours afterward.

Most of the battles of labor and capital—the strikes, lockouts, black lists, and boycotts—have been waged to secure to labor the necessities of life. But in the last quarter of a century a new element has been added,—the effort of a few intelligent laborers to secure a reasonable working day, with long evenings and frequent holidays. The labor unions have for some time past been committed to the movement for an eight-hour day. What is the reason for this change? Why are laborers willing to relinquish in a measure their historic fight for bread to go after this golden apple of leisure?

With the introduction of machinery, several new elements have arisen. One is very highly specialized work. Once a man made a complete product and branded it as the creation of his hand. This gave a feeling of ownership and mastery which resulted in enthusiasm and joy, a result which even play is at pains to replace. Another element is the monotony of work, and the disappearance of the artist from industry. Even the motions to be gone through by the operator of a machine in a factory are mapped out and placed before him. He follows this ceaseless, changeless routine day after day, year after year. His work loses all pretense of variation and artistic quality. It becomes a dull, dreary grind from which even an accident would be a relief. With specialization comes high speed. Every factory has its pace setters; every store keeps a record of the speed of its employees. The result of this unnatural system of narrowed interests and high speed is a feeling of perpetual *ennui* and a desire for change. High pressure during short hours is a natural preparation for dissipation during long hours of leisure.

The increase of leisure is an accomplished

fact. An eight-hour day, short hours for women, and weekly half holidays are to be products of the near future. It has been said that Milwaukee spends 1000 years of leisure each week. With the decrease of child labor more children are turned loose on society for the greater part of the time. Every summer 50,000 boys are turned loose in Chicago for two months with no work and few cares. Some of the brightness of this prospect may fade if you think what a problem is connected with the control of this ever-increasing leisure. Here is a chance for limitless improvement and an equal opportunity for evil.

Dangers of Leisure: Wilcox says, "the difference between virtue and vice as characteristic of a community, which means the success or failure of democracy, lies principally in the use that the people make of their leisure. Work even under disagreeable conditions causes few moral wrecks. It is pleasure-seeking run amuck that threatens the integrity of the race and the permanence of free institutions." He says further, "With the shortening of the hours and the minute division of labor, and the transformation of workmen into

machine tenders, the real significance of work in the formation of character and the development of citizenship is becoming less."* Leisure well used constitutes one of the greatest forces for human progress; misused it is the greatest menace to civilization. Most of the current problems of immorality and vice, such as intemperance, gambling, and prostitution, are essentially problems of the control of leisure.

But the modern contribution to leisure is not so much the increase of leisure for those who already have it. There has always been a leisure class, usually comprising a small percentage of the people. In the cities of Greece and Rome, the greater part of the free population was included in the leisure class. But this rested on an ever-increasing body of slaves who had no leisure. In the Middle Ages the knights and nobility had plenty of leisure, but the simple peasant was told to be patient, to work hard, and to hope for leisure in abundance beyond the grave. His heaven was filled with things it was wrong for him to hope for here below.

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*Wilcox, The American City, page 122.

Before the introduction of machinery and science, leisure for one person could be obtained only by a corresponding sacrifice on the part of some one else. But the Industrial Revolution made possible and the French Revolution put forward the idea of leisure for everyone; and the introduction of machinery has made it possible to raise the entire population into a quasi leisure class without a corresponding sacrifice. The Socialist now tells the laborer that he has been cheated out of his birthright and that he can live in the new society on four or five hours of work a day. Popular leisure is constantly increasing in a geometric ratio and must be reckoned with now. It is not an unmixed good. The greatest problem of the next half century is the problem of the intelligent direction of leisure.

A big southern contractor who worked large bodies of negroes once said there was only one way to keep a negro straight. That was to keep him so busy that he would not have time to get into mischief. But the day is past when anyone can be kept too busy to get into mischief. Then what is to be done with ignorant people who do not know how

to use the leisure which is suddenly being thrust upon them? A southern coal operator solved this problem with some negroes by building a dance hall and hiring musicians to play for them every night until bed time. Amusement is stronger than vice, and it alone can be depended upon to fill the vacant hours of the millions of people who are coming into their inheritance of leisure. Some one may say, Why not try education? The only way to uplift people is along the line of least resistance, by deed rather than by precept and theory. Amusement is this line of least resistance.

Every natural person is interested in some form of amusement. Every child tends to make play of work and will work twice as hard if he is allowed to make play of it. This is merely the assertion of the eternal artist in the child. Every adult has this, but is forced to control it because modern work is mechanical and not artistic. So much the more must the artist assert himself during his hours of recreation. It is through this artistic sense that all improvement must be made. Now since we have proved that this artistic sense is

not used except during leisure hours and that these leisure hours are controlled by commerce, the responsibility for the direction and improvement of the artistic instinct, all that makes life worth living, rests upon commerce. We have seen also that commerce, like its predecessors, spontaneous recreation and repression, has failed utterly to meet this responsibility. Why should we trifle longer with an admitted failure?

3. RECREATION COMMUNALLY ORGANIZED: I would not advocate the overthrow of commerce in leisure without first looking around for a substitute which is better in every respect. Changes of value are never made suddenly. In this case the power which is to overthrow commerce has arisen and is advancing with rapid strides to the conquest of the field. I refer to municipally owned and controlled recreation facilities.

Fifty years ago a public park was unheard of in America. Now a city is considered behind the time without one. Thirty years ago a public playground or athletic field or even a bathing beach was a dream of the future. Today almost every city is partially supplied with

these. Milwaukee, in the summer of 1913, furnished grounds for 450 amateur baseball teams with over 4000 players, and 20,000 games of tennis were played on city courts. Cleveland set up dancing pavilions in the parks, and by charging each couple only three cents a dance, made $9,000 in one summer. But all these places of amusements are closed from October to May, leaving the long winter months to tear down the work of the summer. Another disadvantage lies in the fact that the large parks are frequently built out on the edge of the city, away from the crowded districts which need them most, and can be reached only by a long, hot, expensive ride on a street car. Besides, a great many cities have, like Chicago, so cut up their parks with boulevards as to make them a source of danger to the pedestrian. Chicago has put in free bathing beaches for children in Jackson Park, but it is a careless mother who would trust a child unattended to walk through the park to reach them.

Society and Charity Recreations: Societies and philanthropic agencies have done more than the cities to provide recreation. Lodges

and clubs do a great deal. Stores and factories give dances and picnics. Cooperative clubs are helping make vacations more enjoyable by buying cottages outside the city in partnership. The Y. M. C. A. and the Y. W. C. A., the Boy Scouts, and the Campfire Girls furnish a small percentage of recreation, though they nearly always overemphasize one or two phases to the neglect of all others.

What cities have done: As for the city itself, it has done little. I wonder how many cities have equaled Milwaukee. She furnishes

3 Per cent. of the dancing of the city.
3 Per cent. of the theatrical entertainment.
5 Per cent. of the picnics.
7 Per cent. of the children's play (summer).
30 Per cent. of the sports.
85 Per cent. of the swimming.

Chicago and other cities have added free band concerts, some of which have been attended by 40,000 people. But at most, the efforts of the city so far must be rated as next to nothing. Though we have properly spent billions on education, we have spent but little on recreation, and that little has been poorly utilized. We have spent millions on recrea-

tive facilities for the rich—boulevards, golf courses, and bridle paths—and have only begun to make meagre appropriations for the poor, who need help most because they cannot provide amusement for themselves.

We have for some time been groping in the dark for a solution of this great problem. A few have wished to follow Europe, but the American does not care for the festivals, jubilees, emasculated games, and other European importations. He loves exciting games and contests, especially athletics.

The Chicago Social Centre: I believe the Philosopher's stone has been discovered in the Chicago social centre or small park. This is a new and developing institution and is far from ideal in its present form, but it seems to me to be the beginning of a final solution. It consists of a club house with a plot of land ranging from two to thirty acres around it, placed in every community or within walking distance of everybody in the city. It is a community centre and is expected to supply the greater part of the recreation of the community. As yet the experiment is new and has done little, but bids fair with more money and

attention to be the most vital factor in the life of Chicago.

The ideal social centre: However, certain improvements must be made and certain rules conformed to before the small park or social centre can do what I prophesy for it. Above all, it must be democratic. The European idea which Americans hate most of all is paternalism. They do not want their pleasures chosen for them with a view to giving them what is best for them. They must have what they want or they will buy it elsewhere, and commercialism will still reign supreme. If they want bowling alleys, boxing, vaudeville, or clowns, you must not refuse them even though you know that such things are not best for them. You must give them what they want with a leaning toward the best. The clown and the circus are as valuable in a way as the noblest drama because they mark an epoch in man's growth. There should be little attempt at uniformity; each community should decide its own pleasures.

Of course every complete centre in America would have both indoor and outdoor athletic facilities, because they satisfy more peo-

ple and do them more good than almost any other form of recreation. There should be slides for the children, trapeze and baseball diamonds for the youth, tennis courts for the adults, and lighter games for the aged; and every place should be provided with ample indoor and outdoor facilities for that best loved of all sports, swimming.

On the other hand, every community should be made to realize that there are other interests just as vital as athletics. One which everyone understands is the necessity for social life. Mr. Rainwater, of Hamilton Park, Chicago, advocates merging the social side with the artistic and the educational. But it seems to me that here is the need of a conscious development. Parties in which both sexes could take part should be given once every week or oftener. Games like cards should be introduced, but dancing would be found popular and could be made the most profitable of all the social enjoyments. At these parties new arrivals in the community would have a chance to get acquainted and to get relief from "that lonely feeling" which is fatal to so many young people.

There should be conversation rooms for old people, parlors for the young couples, and smoking rooms for the men. One great trouble with commercialized recreation is that it separates the young people from their parents and older friends, and thereby loosens one strong element of control. It would be foolish to make this mistake again in communally controlled leisure. There should be meeting rooms for clubs and community organizations, places to make speeches, and closets for private conferences. In this way the saloon would be relieved of one of its greatest duties, that of furnishing a meeting place for men's clubs.

Education has been overemphasized in the social centre, but we should not go to the opposite extreme. A branch library in the building helps. A child will read books there who will never go inside a public library. There should be occasional free public lectures on educational subjects. Classes in household arts should be conducted for the women. The younger children could be told stories or taken on tramps and taught the mysteries of nature. All kinds of educational clubs should be encouraged. Boys' street gangs should be

taken in. Every effort to educate should follow the line of least resistance rather than be the result of conscious external planning.

I believe Percy Mackaye errs in thinking the world can be completely renovated and purified solely through a cultivation of art, but there is surely no more important factor than art in this movement for recreation. The phases of art which can be most easily utilized in the social centre are music, drama, and pantomine. In these it should be our object to encourage amateurs rather than professionals. Our centre should provide an assembly hall, small rooms for amateur musicians to practise in, and places for free recitals. Every social centre already has drama played by amateurs, and most of them give huge pageants, all of which make for the highest development in art. It is hard to believe that anyone would ever wax enthusiastic over a burlesque after seeing a pageant. Each neighborhood should have an orchestra or a band, and if the community tired of hearing its own talent it could exchange concerts with other neighborhoods in the city. Above all else, I believe the moving pictures should be taken into the commun-

ity centre and shown at cost under ideal conditions until the commercial houses are compelled to close their doors.

A grand civic centre: Besides the community centres, there should also be a grand civic centre near the heart of the city which would bear somewhat the same relation to the city at large that the smaller centre does to the community. There should be one or more theatres, a music hall for opera and concerts, large reception rooms and dance halls, and a huge colosseum for conventions with smaller rooms for lecturers, rest rooms, and libraries, all owned and operated at cost by the city. A good suggestion is that of a visitor's club, such as some of the German cities have for the convenience of the floating population which now so mistreat our cities and are in turn so mistreated by them. No class has done so much to foster low class amusements and prostitution as has the traveling public. Men will be loose in a strange place who are well behaved at home. A clean club where any visitor could go would help this and would relieve the loneliness of the visitor, making him wish to come back instead of to avoid the city.

It will be objected that for the city to own and operate all this great system would be socialistic and would also bankrupt the city. It is neither more socialistic nor more expensive than our free school system. Besides, it can be made to pay its own expenses and still leave the people of the city richer than if they were forced to buy their pleasure in the marts of commerce. It may be argued that our schools are run in the interest of the state, but what could be more in the interest of the state than the conservation of the health, the morals, and the artistic sense of the people of our cities? Our schools with their millions have confined themselves to the narrow path of knowledge, never having time to explore the green pastures and flowery meadows on either side of their way. These fields *must* not lie unexplored, and the only safe guide within our acquaintance is the small park or community centre.

J.R